Radio Days

WTCC, WCCS and now WFCS at 107.7-- and anywhere at wfcsradio.com

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Features

Back to WTCC ■ *Suddenly Switching Frequencies* ■ *What’s new at WFCS* ■ *Homecoming 2019*

Two-coast radio career leads to growing business

Radio club alumni Lamont Bransford Young is still spinning vinyl and he has about 14,500 choices. It’s a lifetime’s worth of record albums. That collection along with his years of broadcasting experience are now the tools he draws from to operate his DJ school, Fingersnaps Media Arts in San Francisco.

The former WFCS general manager started the school 15 years ago in a spare room in his home and in March Lamont moved the business to a commercial space with a picture window studio that overlooks a busy intersection in the city's Mission District.

"I have taught over 300 students, both children and adults," he said.

When he’s not teaching at his studio, Lamont still gets on the air at KPOO 89.5, San Francisco community radio.

Plying his craft, Lamont Bransford Young at his San Francisco Fingersnaps Media Arts studio. Below, as general manager in Studio A in 1990. Note the vintage Collins board and the stack of tape cartridges (carts, as they were known) in the upper left .

A 1993 Central grad, Lamont always had a passion for music and radio. Growing up in Waterbury, he was a fan of WBLS in New York, a mostly disco station at the time. “I would sleep while the radio was on and I would hear the music in the middle of the night and wake up and just listen to be inspired by it,” as he described for a local publication.

He once tried out for a student slot at the Connecticut School of Broadcasting, but discovered during the audition he wasn't quite ready. Then, he found a better road to launch his career.

"I choose Central Connecticut State University because the Student Center housed a radio station," he recalled. "Being on the radio was a lifelong dream and ambition for me and my primary focus was radio broadcasting. I hosted several formats during my four years on campus.

"When I started in 1989, Chris Craft was the general manager and we bounded instantly over our shared passion for media arts, music, and free speech radio. Although I knew very little about jazz, my first program was a format I had no connection with.

"I would dig through the station's record stacks and choose artists such as Alice Coltrane, John Coltrane, and Sammy Davis Jr., and mix the vintage sounds with electronic and disco music such as 808 State, Mr. Fingers, and Chic. I curated my show as the Jazzy Sound of Dance Music. One of my broadcast peers reported me to the program director and I was scolded for breaking format.

"We wanted to fight it, but the university already moved ahead with the FCC."

"The final program I hosted on WFCS was The Saturday Morning Riff, a house music format from 9 a.m. to noon."

Lamont also did more than host shows; he witnessed the station's frequency switch from 97.9 to 107.7, the current frequency. Witness, only because the move was rather abrupt. "We as station management were not informed until a few weeks before it happened," he said. "We wanted to fight it, but the university already moved ahead with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission)."

A country station in Enfield took the 97.9 frequency and WFCS was moved up the dial to 107.7 without much opportunity to promote the change.

As The Recorder then reported it, "anyone who tried to listen to WFCS at 97.9 on the morning of July12, 1990, was instead greeted by the sounds of Barbara Mandrell and Kenny Rogers. For General Manager Lamont Young, it wasn't music to his ears."

As a result, Lamont spent the rest of his time as general manager improving the station's standing in the community and on campus as well as upgrading WFCS with new equipment.

"Although once the change happened, after a month or two, everyone forgot about the original frequency," he remembers.

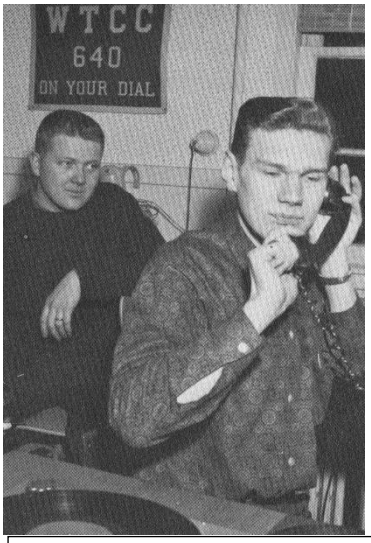
After graduating with a degree in mass media and writing, Lamont worked at WATR 1320, Waterbury; WWYZ 92.5, Waterbury; KMEL106, San Francisco; and KIOI 101.3, San Francisco.

Recalling days (and nights) at the original radio club

Ray Colton joined WTCC in 1959 during his freshman year. It was a transition time. Teachers College of Connecticut became Central Connecticut State College that year and shortly after that, WTCC became WCCS.

By Ray Colton '63

WTCC was located in East Hall, a barracks type building at edge of campus behind Marcus White Hall. When facing the building, the snack bar was on the right, the bookstore on the left and in the middle were various club offices, including the radio station.



The station consisted of three rooms in about 400 square feet. You entered the station from the hallway into the largest of the three rooms that was used for meetings and planning. There was also space for storing records. Toward the back and off the office space was the control room. It was small, maybe 10 feet long by 6 feet wide.

We had two turntables, one on each side of the control board, and a microphone. A glass pane separated the control room from the production room that was about 10 ft by 10 ft. Occasionally, we would interview people there or perform radio plays. One year we tried a radio play written by Stephen Vincent Bene called "Listen to the People." About five or six of us took part.

On the air from East Hall, these two WTCC broadcasters were part of the evening lineup in 1960. Below, the radio club from the 1960 Dial. Right, this coveted Buddy Holly album was part of the WTCC record library and later, the WCCS library as noted by the markings.

WTCC

L.-R., 1st row: K. Martin, D. Legare, M. Seidell, C. Van Derlyke, M. Lipscher, J. Boshko, B. Jones, R. Charamut, M. Kay, J. Kurau. 2nd row: N. Davenport, L. Sheffield, D. Douskey, W. Gustafson, Dr. R. L. Swann, N. Stockman, E. McGrath, C. Robinson, R. Anderson, R. Colton, J. Dantscher, W. Fogarty, G. Toth, F. Freiberger, J. Barbati, R. Avery, R. Hageman. Missing: G. Seferian, J. DeVito.

Students would be assigned time slots for their programs of mostly music. We only broadcasted at night from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., as I recall. We had between 20 to 30 members over the years but the active group was much smaller. I was the station manager in 1963, my senior year. We played 45 rpm and 78 rpm records (yes, we were strictly vinyl) with an occasional larger disk furnished by the U.S. Army. This featured an entire program, running about 15 minutes and was truly a "floppy disk," since it was much bigger than a 78 record.

I usually had a half-hour time slot within the 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. timeframe depending on the year. I played mostly the current popular hits based on whatever records we had available. We received some demo records and bought others.

The biggest problem we had was keeping the transmitter up and running. Over the years, the very low power transmitter was “modified” to put out a stronger and stronger signal. (We did not need an FCC license since our broadcast signal was required to be less than a mile.)

Located where Vance Academic Center now sits, East Hall contained the student center and was home to WTCC until the present Student Center was built in 1964. This 1967 photo shows how the building became a campus maintenance facility. The wooden structure was destroyed by fire about 1975.

In my junior year, the station manager informed me on Monday morning that someone from the FCC had been on campus on Friday and was returning that morning to inspect our transmitter. Apparently, someone about 25 miles away had complained to the FCC about our signal.

“Apparently, someone about 25 miles away had complained to the FCC about our signal.”

Quickly, he took the transmitter to the repair shop so when the FCC guy showed up, there was no transmitter. He looked around and noted the wire that was used to transmit the signal over the air. He commented that the wire was probably too long for our antenna. The station manager did not tell him that the wire was just a lead to the actual antenna that was much longer. We were off the air for some time after that.

During my senior year, the new Student Center was being built and we were told that we would be moving there. A year later, I saw the much-improved space when I returned for homecoming. It was great but I have many fond memories of our activities at WTCC in old East hall.

Life after Central

I entered graduate school at UConn to study speech pathology and audiology. I met my wife at UConn, got married in 1966 and took off for Gainesville, Florida, where I pursued my Ph.D in communication science. In 1969, I accepted a position at the Upstate Medical Center (now university), a part of the State University of New York. I conducted voice and speech research in the Department of Otolaryngology and Communication Sciences and taught medical students and residents.

In 2002, I accepted the chair position in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Syracuse University, where I taught courses in speech science, anatomy and voice disorders. I retired in 2007 and have been traveling a lot, enjoying the grandchildren and keeping my hand in some professional activities. In 2019, my wife and I will have been married for 53 years. How time flies.

Membership grows with an upbeat outlook

By Megan Colleran '21
WFCS Program Director

Despite a rather tumultuous change of administrative duties during WFCS's 2018-2019 school year, the station has seen exceptional membership growth, perhaps one of the biggest reasons why so many members -- students and executive board alike -- have noticed a shift in the station's atmosphere.

The events which had caused some tension in prior years seemed to dissipate; left instead, was a community which encouraged and supported one another with many members going above and beyond to contribute to the station. Much of this camaraderie is due to Brazos Ebner, the station's most recent general manager. Although now graduated, his patient, encouraging leadership helped the station has flourish and plans for the coming year are being put into motion.

High over New York City's Times Square, these WFCS staff scored a cameo appearance on Disney's big board while attending the annual Intercollegiate Broadcasting Conference in the Big Apple. From left, Megan Colleran, program director; Sam Duncan, director of development; McKensi Gudrian and Pat Jezierny, Radio 200 directors.

In other developments, Vicki Minervino, '19, stepped back into the station for the spring semester as interim director of development while helping Brazos shoulder the daunting load of managing the station in the midst of his final year at Central. After an exceptional job and her extensive knowledge of station operations, Vicki will be the general manager for the 2019-2020 school year. She's also responsible for establishing a new, updated website and station logo, which will hopefully be rolled out in the coming year.

Former Radio 200 Director Sam Duncan launched a department-specific social media presence to develop personal profiles and promotions for each Radio 200 DJ. Duncan, who has been elected director of development for the 2019-2020 school year, brings with her a wealth of ideas and potential. If her exceptional job as music director is any indication of what's to come, the station is in for a truly revolutionary shift.

It's also worth mentioning that next year's station administration will be almost entirely female — purely coincidental, of course, but nevertheless cool.

In other spring semester news, WFCS staff attended the Intercollegiate Broadcasting Conference, a three-day college and high school radio convention hosted at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City. This year's conference proved to be extremely informative and engaging, with panels featuring topics like establishing a station website, landing internships, getting interviews and roundtables on numerous radio jobs.

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Representing WFCS was Brazos Ebner (general manager), Devon Wilson (public relations), Megan Colleran (program director), Sam Duncan and Pat Jezierny (Radio 200 directors), and McKensi Gudrian (student DJ). They attended two specialty panels.

The first, hosted by Scott Hopek, iHeartMedia division president, outlined what it takes to be a successful business leader in the industry. Hopek is responsible for turning around New York City's six major radio stations -- Z100, Power 105.1, 106.7 Lite FM, 103.5 KTU, Q104.3, and 710 WOR -- making them the top of New York's radio market revenue. Hopek stayed after his presentation to meet with the WFCS staff.

Valerie Geller led the second panel. She's an international media consultant who works with programmers, talent, and producers on getting, keeping, and engaging audiences with entertaining and powerful radio content. Geller commanded the room's attention with a warm, inviting voice and a genuine interest in the crowd. WFCS staff took the opportunity to ask her about improving radio content and establishing and organizing podcasting materials. Geller provided a wealth of insightful advice, with many of her tips leaving a lasting impression.

The convention inspired our WFCS attendees. They returned with renewed motivation and enthusiasm for radio and instilled the rest of the station's staff with that drive during their briefing at the first station meeting after the convention. According to our community volunteers, their zeal to apply that new knowledge stood out well compared to previous years.

The year ended with the Media Board Banquet and the Student Center award ceremony, where many WFCS members received well-earned commendations for their contributions to the station and the center.

We look forward to a prosperous and productive year. The future of WFCS is in good hands.

Megan Colleran is a media studies major and plans a career in television and film production.

Mark your calendar now

There's something extra for WFCS alumni at **Homecoming 2019, Oct. 18 – 19.**

Friday evening, the reunions event at the Stanley Golf Course lounge. Meet at the WFCS table or, weather permitting, a place on the outdoor deck.

Saturday morning, alumni broadcasts are homecoming's first event that day. Be part of the start!

Airtime will be set aside for alumni radio shows thanks to the generous support of WFCS's staff. Watch your email about mid-September to sign up (or just stop by for some refreshments and enjoy the company!).

Then there's the brunch, the game, the after-game party and our "after-homecoming" radio club alumni gathering, the location to be decided that afternoon.

For more homecoming details, visit the alumni association's web page at http://www.ccsu.edu/alumni/homecoming.html